



BRAC Environmental Office
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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

HAMILTON ARMY AIRFIELD

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Regional Water Quality Control Board

Jim Ponton
Regional Water Quality Control Board

Lance McMahan
California Dept. of Toxic Substances Control

Theresa McGarry
California Dept. of Toxic Substances Control

Rich Seraydarian
US Environmental Protection Agency

Technical Support

Ray Zimny
US Army Corps of Engineers

Jim McAlister
US Army Corps of Engineers

FROM WETLAND HABITAT TO HARDSTANDS AND BACK AGAIN

After more than a century of human use—first as farmland and then as a military base—and following six years of intense research, analysis, and remediation, the Army and the State of California now agree that the Hamilton Army Airfield property is ready for transfer to the California Coastal Conservancy (CCC) and the City of Novato. The CCC plans to recreate the former wetland, providing critical habitat for endangered species such as the California clapper rail and the salt marsh harvest mouse.

Hamilton's History

Hamilton Army Airfield was originally a wetland, part of a vast network of wetlands that surrounded San Pablo Bay. The area was first used for ranching and farming in the early 1800s. By the early 1900s, Novato farmers had built levees and drained over 1,000 acres of the wetland, creating fertile farmland on which they grew peas and oat hay. In 1932, the Federal Government purchased what is now Hamilton Army Airfield and built the military installation, providing much-needed opportunities for employment during the Great Depression. The military facility earned the nickname “the country club” because of its uncharacteristically stylish architecture, its striking landscape of rolling hills, and its wide variety of recreational facilities.

Operations at Hamilton provided support for troops during both World War II and the Vietnam War. Thousands of service-people injured during the war were treated at the Hamilton Hospital each month and, in later years, south-east Asian immigrants were temporarily housed in the former soldiers' barracks until permanent accommodations could be secured.

Congress Mandates that Hamilton Return to Wetlands

As the Novato area grew in size, local residents became less tolerant of aircraft noise. At the same time, advancements in aircraft technology required longer runways and the airfield gradually became obsolete. In 1974, Hamilton was officially designated “excess property” and nine years later Congress mandated that the original wetland be restored to provide habitat for endangered species such as the California clapper rail and salt marsh harvest mouse and to act as natural filtration for runoff water draining to San Pablo Bay.

Environmental Work/Documentation Leads to Transfer

Since 1997, the Army has worked closely with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) to clean-up the 644-acre Main Airfield Parcel so that wetland restoration can begin. Each environmental study and clean-up action has been conducted in accordance with state and federal law and with the approval of DTSC and RWQCB.

All of the environmental documents described in this newsletter are available for review at the Hamilton BRAC office library.



Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Update

RAB RESPONSIBILITIES

The Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), is an advisory board made up of interested and concerned community members who reflect the diverse interests of the local community as well as representatives of state, local, and federal agencies. The RAB is designed to serve as a focal point for the exchange of information between the Army and Navy and the community regarding those restoration activities presently underway, as well as those planned for future studies and remediation.

The Hamilton RAB meets quarterly. The next RAB meeting is October __, 2003. To receive further information regarding the RAB, community involvement, environmental clean-up at Hamilton, or to be added to the Hamilton RAB mailing list, please contact:

Joy Lanzaro (415) 883-6386.

Upcoming Meetings

The next **RAB Meeting** will be held at the Hamilton School Multi-Purpose Room.

- October __, 2003, 7 p.m.

For More Information

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Information Repositories

Marin County Public Library, Novato Branch

1720 Novato Boulevard, Novato, CA 94947

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HAAF Army BRAC Environmental Office

Please call for an appointment.

www.spk.usace.army.mil/cespk-pm/haaf/rab/rab.html

www.efdswnavfac.navy.mil/Environmental/Novato.htm

MAIN AIRFIELD

FINDING OF SUITABILITY FOR EARLY TRANSFER (FOSET)

What is a FOSET?

A FOSET describes the overall environmental condition of the property and documents the environmental suitability of a property for an “early transfer”. The term “early transfer” refers to the fact that some residual clean-up actions will continue after transfer of the property is complete.

The Hamilton FOSET

The FOSET covers the Main Airfield Parcel only, allowing the CCC and the City of Novato to take title of the property before all the environmental remedial actions described in the ROD/RAP are complete. The early transfer process, in effect, defers the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) covenant that requires all necessary remedial actions to be completed before the federal property is transferred.

The Governor of California must agree with the request to defer the CERCLA covenant in order for the early transfer to be concluded. The Governor’s agreement must be based on the following findings:

- The property is suitable for the intended reuse (wetland and open space);
- There has been public notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed transfer;

- The transfer will not substantially delay any necessary response action; and
- The transfer agreement restricts property use if necessary, assures clean-up will continue, and provides assurance that funding is available.

The FOSET briefly summarizes the information contained in the ROD/RAP. It identifies the locations and nature of the residual contamination, lists the deed and contractual assurances that are enforceable by law, and concludes that the property meets Department of Defense requirements for early transfer. The FOSET also provides notification to the public regarding asbestos, lead based paint, residual pesticides and residual petroleum-based products.

Public Comment Period

The Army released the Main Airfield Parcel FOSET for a 30-day public review period on June 5, 2003. The Army held a public meeting on June 16, 2003 to explain the document and to receive public comments. The Army will consider all public comments and will make any necessary changes to the FOSET before finalizing the document.

RECORD OF DECISION/REMEDIAL ACTION PLAN (ROD/RAP)

What is a ROD/RAP?

A Record of Decision/Remedial Action Plan (ROD/RAP) is a document that lists the areas requiring further clean-up. The ROD/RAP also proposes the recommended methods of remediation. A ROD/RAP is prepared in accordance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) and California Health and Safety Code, Section 25356.1.

The Hamilton ROD/RAP

The Draft ROD/RAP identifies areas in the Main Airfield Parcel (Inboard Area) and adjacent coastal salt marsh that require additional remediation. The Army has completed many remedial clean-up actions on the Main Airfield Parcel over the past six years; however, residual contamination remains at various locations around the property and the ROD/RAP defines the final clean-up actions that will be required.

The final clean-up actions will support the restoration of the wetland, and will also support the early transfer of the Main Airfield Parcel to the City of Novato and California Coastal Conservancy (CCC). The term “early transfer” refers to the fact that some clean-up actions will continue after the CCC and the City of Novato take ownership of the property.

The Draft ROD/RAP developed and evaluated four remedial action alternatives:

Alternative 1, No Further Action

Alternative 2, Excavation and Offsite Disposal

Alternative 3, Manage In-Situ, with Monitoring and Maintenance, for Army BRAC Sites

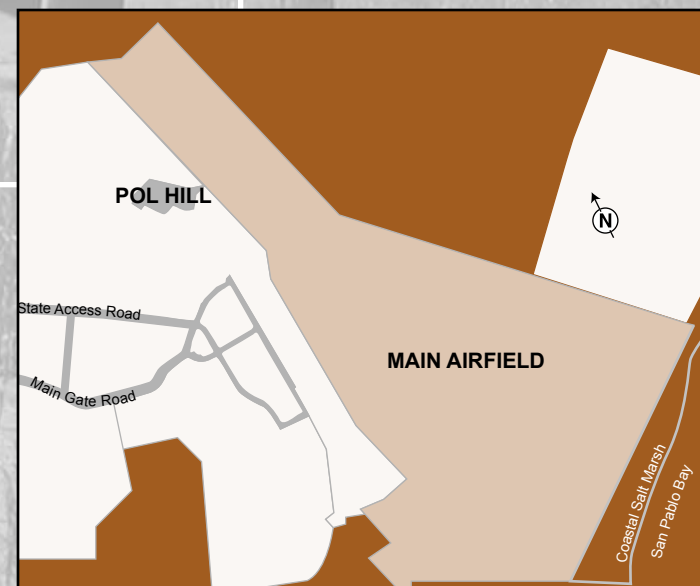
Alternative 4, Manage Onsite, with Monitoring and Maintenance, for Army Civil Works Issues

Three of the alternatives were evaluated for the Inboard Area sites (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3). Two alternatives were evaluated for the coastal salt marsh sites (Alternatives 1 and 2). Two alternatives (Alternatives 1 and 4) were also evaluated for the area-wide pesticides near the runway. The Draft ROD/RAP compares each alternative, as appropriate, and recommends the remedial actions for each site.

Regulator Review and Public Comment

The US Army, the DTSC and RWQCB jointly prepared and reviewed the Draft ROD/RAP. The Army, DTSC and RWQCB invited the public to comment on the Draft ROD/RAP from June 5 to July 21, 2003, and held a public meeting on Wednesday July 9, 2003.

The Army, DTSC and the RWQCB will consider all public comments and will make any necessary changes to the Draft ROD/RAP before finalizing the document. The Final ROD/RAP will direct all future remedial actions on the Main Airfield Parcel and adjacent coastal salt marsh.



POL HILL

FINDING OF SUITABILITY FOR TRANSFER (FOST)

Petroleum Oil and Lubricant (POL) Hill is located to the west of the airfield parcel, as shown in the figure. The property is referred to as POL Hill because 21 underground and five aboveground tanks were located there, storing petroleum products for the operations at Hamilton. The storage tanks were removed from the property in 1986 and 1990.

What is a FOST?

A FOST is a report that describes the overall environmental condition and suitability of property for transfer from federal ownership. In addition, a FOST identifies any use restrictions necessary to protect human health and the environment

The POL Hill FOST

The Draft POL Hill FOST identifies the locations of former and existing structures. It also presents information pertaining to the historical activities and interprets the data collected from groundwater monitoring wells over the past four years. The FOST concludes that the property meets Department of Defense requirements for transfer.

The Draft POL Hill FOST also provides notification regarding asbestos, lead based paint, residual pesticide and residual petroleum-based products and includes land use restrictions that are part of a covenant now attached to the property’s deed.

Public Comment Period

The Army requested public comments on the Draft POL Hill FOST during a 30-day public comment period beginning June 30, 2003 through July 30, 2003. The Army held a public meeting on July 23, 2003. At the meeting, Army representatives explained the POL Hill FOST to interested community members, answered questions, and received public comments. The Army will consider all public comments and will make any necessary changes to the FOST before finalizing the document.

For more information about Department of Defense documents that pertain to BRAC closures, please visit the website at [http:// dtic.mil/envirodod/Policies/PDBRAC.htm](http://dtic.mil/envirodod/Policies/PDBRAC.htm)

For more information about the Hamilton BRAC, please visit the website at <http://www.spk.usace.army.mil/cespk-pm/haaf.docs.html>

COASTAL SALT MARSH FOCUSED FEASIBILITY STUDY (FFS)

The coastal salt marsh is located between the main airfield and San Pablo Bay, as shown in the figure.

What is a FFS?

The purpose of a FFS is to identify areas that require remediation and to develop, evaluate, and recommend an alternative for each area to protect health and the environment.

The Hamilton FFS

The Hamilton FFS addresses contamination in the entire coastal salt marsh area from the perimeter levee to San Pablo Bay. (The Army prepared a separate FFS for the Inboard Area sites.) The coastal salt marsh FFS evaluates eight sites to determine whether further is needed.

To determine which coastal salt marsh sites require further action, the FFS combines historical and recently collected data, establishes chemicals of potential concern, and develops action goals to bring the concentration of those chemicals to an acceptable level. The FFS then establishes remedial action objectives and screens technologies that will protect human health and the environment, consistent with the use of the site as a wetland/coastal salt marsh. The FFS evaluates each alternative based on the nine criteria specified in the National Oil and Hazardous Substance Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP). The NCP provides evaluation criteria by which the preferred remedial alternative(s) can be selected.